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PROCEEDINGS  
OF  
THE ROYAL IRISH ACADEMY.

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1846-7.

No. 69.

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June 28th, 1847.

REV. HUMPHREY LLOYD, D. D., President, in the  
Chair.

His Grace the Archbishop of Dublin was elected a Member of Council, on the Committee of Polite Literature.

IT WAS RESOLVED,—That the sum of £50 be placed at the disposal of the Council, for the purchase of antiquities.

The Secretary read the draft of an Address to His Excellency the Lord Lieutenant, which had been ordered at the last Meeting.

RESOLVED,—That the Address now read be adopted by the Academy.

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John Anster, LL.D., read a paper by the Rev. James Wills, in continuation of his former papers on “the Association of Ideas.”

The author commenced by stating, that, according to the view to which he had been led, the subject might be divided under three heads of inquiry :—the class of associations formed by habits of action and perception, as described in his first Essay ; those from accidental association, explained in the second ; and those next to be considered, originating in the mind itself. From the first he had endeavoured to trace the

main stock of human ideas and capabilities of action ; to the second he had traced the process of memory ; the third he would show to be mainly instrumental in invention, and in various ways operative in art and literature, as also upon human character and conduct, and, lastly, upon the operations of judgment and reasoning.

The formation of new ideas by the mind might, he observed, be effected by means, not directly to be described as single operations of thought ; of this nature were purely artistic ideas, which might be framed by rules according to certain models, and then become ideas of association or not, according to circumstances. Such results were excluded from the author's inquiry, and were only mentioned to guard against any misconception, and for the sake of a distinction, which would be available in his illustrations.

The process at present to be considered by the author is mainly distinguishable from that examined in his first Essay, by the fact that, while the first class of associations were framed gradually from the immediate repetition of acts or perceptions, those now to be explained were instantaneously put together from general *analogies*, which were, however, themselves framed from habitual experience, like the former. These analogies are insensibly contracted through life, and are the nearest approach to universal ideas, consisting of characters, forms, colours, proportions, and properties, which are variously combined throughout all known existence. Such are the elements of conceptual power, or the faculty of spontaneous association, of which the action and exercise could be variously determined by the habits and character of each individual.

The author briefly exemplified the mode of operation ; and went on to say that he would pursue the subject in relation to literary composition and art,—to moral sentiment,—and, lastly, to the operations of reasoning.

From this the author gave an explanation shewing the justice of Mr. Locke's distinction between wit and judgment.

The first head of this division might be regarded as coincident with those mental operations commonly included under the term *imagination*, which he would occasionally use, as a convenient term, and of familiar use.

The author next proceeded to show that, as the ideas he had described were essentially those of sensible properties, it must be a consequence that their combination must be sensible associations, and therefore affecting the mind, in whatever degree, in the same manner as the sensible presence of such objects, had they any real or external existence. Such effects would be very indistinct in some (probably in most) minds, and very intense in others. It would be apparent from these considerations, that in one class of writers, or artists, the mind constructs a combination by mere rules, and in another from a distinct and sensible conception; and further, that in the analysis of writings or works of art, some indications might be discoverable of these two different modes of operation.

There was also another consideration, which, though seemingly leading to a difficulty, would very much tend to aid in the clear exemplification of this process. Its nature being to produce effects similar to the known effects of present reality, may be traced more clearly by comparison with them. The author would, he said, avail himself of this inference as a means of illustration.

He then proceeded to cite various examples from standard poets, in which he traced the indications of distinct presence, or conception of presence, which he severally contrasted with conjectural cases of the opposite mode of artistic construction, without those conceptions.

The author next proceeded to notice other kinds of examples in the conception of characters, events, and in translation of the thoughts of others, in which he showed that the difference of language could frequently be only remedied by equivalents supplied by the aid of the original conception.

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